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For Immediate Release:

BLM To Recover Costs Relating to Recreation Permits

Additional Proposed Regulations Would Provide Greater Continuity for Recreation Service Providers and Facilitate Law Enforcement

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today published a final rule in the *Federal Register* that will update cost-recovery requirements and make other changes in the BLM's existing recreation regulations. The rule will modernize how the agency recovers costs by emphasizing resource protection, addressing health and safety requirements, and incorporating new developments in recreation technology.

"These revisions will help the BLM meet today's demands and expectations from the public lands," said BLM Director Kathleen Clarke, who noted that the current regulations have not changed in 16 years. "The up-to-date cost-recovery standards represent good business and good stewardship of the public's resources because they will ensure that sponsors of major events pay a reasonable fee to offset the costs of planning for and managing these activities," Clarke added.

The rule will give BLM field managers the flexibility to make decisions concerning permits and permit conditions based on the local land and resource conditions. In particular, the rule will affect large-scale group activities such as weddings, public gatherings — such as the Burning Man Festival in Nevada — and various competitive events, including dog-sled races and off-highway vehicle races. The BLM expects that fewer than 100 events per year will be affected by the change in fee structure.

With the rapid increase in population in the West, demand for outdoor recreational opportunities is soaring. The number of visits to the public lands more than doubled in the last decade, with 52 million recreation visits on public lands in 2001. As Western cities and towns grow closer to once-remote BLM lands, more domestic visitors and international travelers are turning to these lands as their outdoor recreational playground. This increase in recreation visits poses a management challenge to the BLM, since the cost of providing amenities and other services to the expanding recreation public has dramatically outpaced the BLM's recreation budget, which

has increased only slightly over the past decade. The rule seeks reimbursement for certain planning activities that require significant staff time, such as the cost of planning for and responding to large-scale events held on public land.

To recover the costs of issuing recreation permits, the BLM will seek reimbursement for recreation-related activities and events that require more than 50 hours of administrative time. This rule is consistent with similar BLM and Forest Service land-use programs. Revenues collected under the regulation will go back to the BLM to help protect the public lands and benefit the recreation public. The agency will not collect permit fees in cases where it charges cost recovery for recreational events.

A proposed rule on recreation cost recovery published on May 16, 2000, in the *Federal Register* generated about 400 public comment letters. The final rule reflects the public concerns and suggestions from these letters.

In addition, the BLM proposes amending its regulations on recreational use of the public lands in the following two ways:

- The BLM proposes to amend its regulations on Special Recreation Permits by changing the maximum term for these permits to 10 years instead of 5 years. The reason for this change is to add a reasonable expectation of continuity for outfitters, guides, and other small businesses that provide services to recreationists on public lands.
- The BLM also proposes to amend its regulations on Recreation Use Permits for fee areas by adding a section on prohibited acts and penalties. This new provision is necessary to give BLM law enforcement personnel authority to cite persons who do not pay fees or otherwise do not follow the regulations on Recreation Use Permits.

The public is invited to comment on these proposed regulations by December 2. The BLM will not necessarily consider comments postmarked or received by messenger or electronic mail after the above date. You may comment via the Internet by accessing our automated commenting system located at www.blm.gov/nhp/news/regulatory/index.html and following the instructions there.

We intend to post all comments on the Internet. If you are requesting that your comment remain confidential, do not send your comment to the direct internet response website. Use mail, messenger, or email (include your request for confidentiality) to WOCComment@blm.gov. We will post all electronically-received comments online as soon as we receive them.

The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land—262 million surface acres—than any other Federal agency. Most of the country's BLM-managed public land is located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, which has a budget of \$1.8 billion and a workforce of 10,000 employees, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the Nation. The BLM's "multiple use" mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The BLM accomplishes this by managing for such resources as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, and energy and mineral development that helps meet the nation's energy needs, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on the public lands.

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